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SPELLJAMMER™

THE ROGUE SHIP: 4

By Kesel, Collins & Panosian

Mike Collins ©90

TO UNIPAXALA WE CAME IN THIS STRANGE SHIP, ONLY TO FIND THE WORLD OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS OVERRUN BY THE CRUEL NEOGI AND THEIR UMBER HULK SLAVES.

MEREDITH THE CAPTAIN, THE FIGHTER JASMINE AND PAX, HIGH PRIEST OF THIS WORLD, WERE INVESTIGATING A WAY TO HALT THE NEOGI INVASION.

BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG-- MOTHER OF SONGS HAS SUNG TO ME ONCE MORE, THE SHRILL MELODY OF DANGER, SO WE OF THE TRIBE HAVE SPOKEN THE TALE OF MAGIC TO GO TO THEIR RESCUE.

THAT SPELL YOU ALL CAST--

YOU MEAN THE UMBER HULKS *CAN'T* SEE US?

WE'RE REALLY *INVISIBLE*?

YES, TEMBER.

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THE ROGUE SHIP, PART FOUR:

SONG'S END, TALE'S BEGINNING

HEADS UP, UGLY! I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE PEACE-LOVING CLERICS!

YOU'RE IN FOR A FIGHT THAT'LL STRAIN YOUR TINY LITTLE MIND!

HALT!

THE SLAVES, IT IS, OUTNUMBER THE INTRUDER!

YOU WILL ATTEND, IT IS, TO THE OTHER ABERRATION OR KNOW OUR BITE!

THAT STRANGE GIRL --WHERE DID SHE COME FROM?

SHE MUST BE CONNECTED WITH THE ONE WHO CAST THE MAGIC SPHERE FROM BELOW THE ICE-RING PROJECTOR-- SOMEONE OR SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE NEOGI HAS REACHED OUR WORLD.

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FEEL THAT, GRUESOME? THAT POISON'LL DROP YOU REAL SOON...

RRRONNNK!

RRRONNNK!

THOUGH MAYBE NOT SOON ENOUGH TO DO ME ANY GOOD...

YOU WILL, *IT IS*, HOLD SMALL ONE FOR *BITING!*

I'M WARNING YOU, EEL-LIPS, YOU'D BETTER BACK OFF OR YOU MIGHT GET HURT!

THINK FAST, GIRL--A NEOGI'S BITE MEANS DEATH!

THIS SPHERE WE'RE IN--THAT'S A POWERFUL SPELL. I HAD NO IDEA YOU COULD--

I *DIDN'T*, PAX. IT'S A MAGIC ITEM I ALWAYS CARRY WITH ME.

MAGIC ITEM? BUT I *WATCHED* YOU *CAST* THAT SPELL...

WHY *LIE* TO ME?

WE SHOULD DISCUSS OUR NEXT MOVE.

I'M GOING TO GO ACTIVATE THE ARTIFACT. STAY HERE UNTIL I RETURN.

WHAT?

MEREDITH, MY PEOPLE ARE RISKING THEIR *LIVES* UP THERE BECAUSE OF THE TRAITORS IN THEIR MIDST!

I'LL NOT HIDE AWAY WHILE THEY ARE IN DANGER!

IF I MUST, I'LL DIE WITH THEM--I'VE NO DESIRE TO BE ELDER OF A DEAD WORLD!

YOU-- YOU *PEACE* LOVERS HAVE SUCH AN IDIOTIC SENSE OF LOGIC!

CONCEPT, SPEECH, *TONGUES.*

TONGUES.

...THEN, WHEN THE FOOD HAS BEEN GATHERED TOGETHER, THE SLAVES WILL LOAD IT ONTO THE SHIPS.

THE FOOD WILL BE DIVIDED *EQUALLY* BETWEEN CLANS, *OF COURSE!* IT BELONGS TO *ALL!*

FOOD! THEY TOOK OVER UNIPAXALA JUST TO STEAL OUR *FOOD?*

NEOGI!

I WISH WE KNEW WHAT THEY WERE SAYING...

YES-- QUICKLY! THE TALE!

THIS IS THE TALE OF COMPREHEN-SION.

NA, BOY--LOOK AT THE *TEETH* OF THOSE CREATURES-- THEY LOOK LIKE THE MAN-EATERS BACK HOME.

IT'S PROBABLY YOUR *FOLK* THEY SEE AS *FOOD.*

NO!

THEY CAN'T! WE'VE GOT TO STOP THEM! WE CAN'T LET THEM *EAT* MY PEOPLE! C'MON! YOU'VE GOT MAGIC, AND I KNOW ALL THE SECRET TUNNELS INSIDE-- WE'LL *KILL* THEM AND--

KILL, TEMBER? I THOUGHT THAT WASN'T THE WAY OF YOUR PEOPLE.

CALM DOWN-- THE INVISIBILITY WILL FADE IF YOU ATTACK--

--I HAVE AN IDEA.

OKAY, OKAY! I'M CALM, BUT WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING!

I'LL DEFER TO RUPAU'S JUDGMENT-- HE'S OUR TRIBE'S BEST HUNTER--

--BUT I THINK WE SHOULD SEND A *SMALL* PARTY INSIDE WHILE OTHERS RETURN TO THE SHIP. SINCE YOU SAY YOU KNOW OF *TUNNELS*, TEMBER--

NO, WAIT --I'VE *GOT* IT!

WE GO IN THROUGH THE TUNNELS, WHICH I'M SURE THE NEOGI WON'T FIND, AND CRAWL INSIDE THE WALLS TO THE HIGHEST TOWERS--

THEN SOME OF US, STILL INVISIBLE, DROP OUT OF THE TOWER AND STRANGLE SOME WHILE THE REST PRY OUT STONES TO DROP DOWN ON THE OTHERS--

--COMPLETELY *CRUSHING* THE UMBER HULKS SO THE NEOGI'LL BE SO SCARED THEY--

--THEY...

...UH...

RUPAU! WHAT DO *YOU* THINK WE SHOULD DO?

CAREFUL, EVERYBODY--ONCE WE ENTER THE *LIGHT* SIDE, THEY'LL BE ABLE TO SPOT US BY OUR--

--SHADOWS...

NO SHADOWS?

THIS RESCUE IS GOING TO BE A SNAP!

SINCE THEY CAN'T *SEE* US, THOSE DUMB UMBER HULKS'LL--

RRRRRNNNKK

...SQUASH US LIKE B-B-B...

HEY!

UH...

THANKS, HANNOUS.

YOU CAN PUT ME DOWN NOW.

DOWN?

PLEASE?

NOW, WHERE? OH... I WAS JUST ABOUT TO SHOW YOU THE LOCKS...

ONCE YOU KNOW THE TRICK, ALL THESE HIDDEN ENTRANCES LOOK ALIKE!

I FOUND THESE OLD TUNNELS WHEN I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE *MEDITATING* ...

KLIK

I BET YOU'RE GLAD I'M THE *RESTLESS* TYPE...

WHICH WAY NOW, TEMBER?

TOWARD THE *CENTER*. I KNOW THE TUNNELS NEAR THE SOUTHERN TOWER THE BEST, BUT THEY'RE ALL PRETTY MUCH THE SAME--

--THE LEFT-HAND FORKS HEAD *IN* AND THE OTHERS HEAD *OUT*.

PRETTY EASY TO NAVIGATE, REALLY-- NO SURPRISES.

KLIK

EEEYAUGH!

FIRE LIZARD!

FIRE LIZARD?

WHAT'S A FIRE LIZARD DOING HERE?

RUN!

HISSSSSSSS

NO--LET'S SEE IF WE CAN GET AROUND IT WITHOUT ATTACKING BEFORE WE RETREAT.

HISSSSS

BUT WHO'S GONNA TELL *IT* NOT TO ATTACK?

WAIT...

...SOMETHING'S WRONG...

TEMBER, WHAT IS THE BASIC TENET OF YOUR PEOPLE?

"...TO REVERE PEACE IN ALL ITS MYRIAD FORMS, TO BRING NO HARM TO OTHERS AND RESOLVE CONFLICT THROUGH THE POWERS OF THE MIND."

KIRSTIG, I REALLY THINK THIS IS A *BAD* TIME TO DISCUSS PHILOSOPHY.

NOT WHEN THAT PHILOSOPHY HOLDS THE ANSWER.

KIRSTIG!

STOP!

DON'T LET HER --!

IT'S AN ILLUSION!

I WONDERED WHY PEOPLE WHO REVERE *PEACE* WOULD HAVE SUCH A *VICIOUS* GUARDIAN.

SINCE WE CAN'T BE SEEN, IT WAS PROBABLY ACTIVATED NOT BY A HUMAN GUARD, BUT BY A MECHANICAL DEVICE.

WE MUST WATCH OUR STEPS CAREFULLY.

BUT *SWIFTLY* --WE'VE LOST PRECIOUS TIME.

LOST IT BECAUSE OF *ME*-- I SHOULD'VE *KNOWN* IT WAS A TRICK!

I *LIVE* HERE-- *THEY'RE* THE ONES FROM A DIFFERENT WORLD!

AND WHAT IF IT HAD BEEN A *REAL* MONSTER?

THEY COULD USE THEIR MAGIC TO GET AWAY.

ME, I'M USELESS.

HEY, FANGFACE--LET'S GIVE YOUR SLIMY PAL A *HAND!*

WHOCK

GOOD BOY.

SORRY, FELLAS--CAN'T PLAY--I HAVE TO FLY--

FOR ONCE, HAVING THESE WINGS IS A STROKE OF LUCK!

UHH!

NO GOOD... THEY'RE TOO TORN TO CARRY ME...

WHUD KREEEESH

NO WAY OUT.

NO *EASY* WAY.

TYMORA, I COULD USE A LITTLE OF YOUR LUCK RIGHT NOW.

OKAY, YOU FOUR-EYED FREAKS... I SEE... YOU HAVEN'T LEARNED YOUR LESSON YET...

WELCOME TO THE KITCHEN --ONE OF THE PLACES I KNOW BEST.

PLUS, IT HAS A HANDY VIEW OF THE GREAT HALL THROUGH THOSE SHUTTERS IN CASE MENTORS--I MEAN *NEOGI* --ARE COMING!

LOTS OF NOISE OUTSIDE --*BATTLE* NOISE.

HAVE THEY ACTIVATED THE ICE-RING PROJECTOR?

THE TALL THING IN THE CENTER--IS IT GLOWING? CAN YOU SEE IT?

I CAN SEE *JASMINE'S* IN TROUBLE.

OH, SHE CAN TAKE CARE OF HERSELF. SHE'S ALWAYS SAYING SO.

NOT *THIS* TIME, I THINK.

UNG!

THAT... BEST YOU CAN DO?

WE MUST HELP HER! *HURRY!*

BUT HOW? *I* CAN'T DO MAGIC--I DON'T EVEN HAVE A WEAPON!

A WEAPON

WHOOP!
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
RRRRONNNK!
WHY, HELLO, STRANGER!
MAGIC MISSILES
PERSONALLY, I FIND A GOOD KICK IN THE TEETH WORKS JUST AS WELL.
WHAP
MAGIC MISSILES
MAGICAL STONE
YAAAAAH!
YOU STUPID UMBER HULK--
GET AWAY FROM THEM!
TEMBER!

YES, TEMBER... OF COURSE.

AMAZING.

MOVE, YOU BUGHEAD!

RUPAU-- IT'S CLEAR! GO BREAK THE CRYSTAL!

THEY'RE FULLY ENGAGED IN FIGHTING NOW-- THAT WILL COVER OUR EXIT NICELY.

OUR EXIT... VERY GOOD.

BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING OUTSIDE?

CITIZENS OF UNIPAXALA-- FIGHT THEM OFF!

HELP SAVE OUR WORLD-- YOUR LIVES!

RRRRONK!

C'MON! I MEAN IT!

WE *MUST* HELP-- BUT HOW?

WE'VE TAKEN A *VOW* NEVER TO HURT ANY LIVING CREATURE.

WE DON'T HAVE TO *HARM*, MERELY *CONFOUND*.

CONFUSION SHOULD AID RESOLUTION OF THIS CONFLICT.

YOU WILL, IT IS, BE MOVING!

THIS ONE CANNOT OBSERVE!

OH... ARE WE IN YOUR WAY?

THERE'S NOTHING I LIKE BETTER THAN THE SOUND OF *THEM* FALLING!

SNIKT

SO...KIRSTIG'S PEOPLE ARE FINALLY SHOWING OFF THEIR MAGIC.

THEIR MAGIC?

THEY ARE BEHIND THIS *CARNAGE*?

RRRRONNNK!

NOT ALONE-- LOOK WHO'S LEADING THE CHARGE.

TEMBER!

LIGHT!

RRRRONNNK!

EYAUGH!

RUPAU?

RRRRONNK

HANNOUS?

DON'T WORRY, KIRSTIG-- I'VE GOT THE HAMMER!

WHACK

PRODUCE FLAME

THEN BREAK THE CRYSTAL, TEMBER-- WE CAN'T HELP YOU!

YEOWW!

RRRIP

NO!

NOT NOW! YOU CAN'T--!

TEMBER ...?

YEOWTCH!

LEVITATE!

THANKS, MEREDITH!

I JUST NEEDED... A CHANCE ...

KRAKKK

I DID IT!

"NOW WE'LL BE ABLE TO SQUASH THOSE SPIDERS GOOD!"

<ATTACK!>

<AIEEEEEE! DANGER!>

<AMBUSH!>

<THE SHIP TUMBLES! WHAT, IT IS, HAS MADE DISTURBANCE?>

<SPHERE OF COLD CUTTING US OFF FROM OTHERS!>

<NO FOOD!>

<CUT OFF FROM FOOD!>

IT WOULD SEEM THE TIDE HAS TURNED.

YEAAAA! ANOTHER VICTORY FOR *PEACE*...

...THANKS TO *ME* AND MY TRUSTY SWORD!

I FEAR WE'VE LOST HIM. . . .

<SINCE YOU UGLY LITTLE MONSTERS ONLY UNDERSTAND CONCEPTS BASED ON *POSSESSION*...>

<HEAR ME!>

<THIS WORLD --I *OWN* IT!>

<IT AND *YOU* ARE NOW *MY* PROPERTY!>

<NOW, YOU LITTLE WORM-HEADED SLUG, LET'S TALK TERMS...>

LATER...

<I'M SHOCKED THEY'D JUST LET THOSE MONSTERS LEAVE.>

<KILLING'S NOT THEIR WAY.>

<PITY. I'D FEEL SAFER WITH THEM GONE.>

WE WILL, *IT IS*, BE RETURNING!

YES, WE EXPECT YOU'LL TRY. WITHOUT INSIDE HELP, I DOUBT YOU'LL SUCCEED A SECOND TIME.

<AND WHEN WE DO, I WILL, *IT IS*, YOUR NECK BE BITING PERSONALLY!>

EVERYBODY'S MAKING PLANS, GETTING READY TO GO SOMEWHERE, DO SOMETHING...

...BUT NOBODY'S PLANS INCLUDE ME.

I DON'T FIT IN AND *EVERYBODY* KNOWS IT.

ONCE AGAIN, MEREDITH... THANK YOU.

I WAS HIRED FOR A JOB AND I EXECUTED IT TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY, PAX.

AND IF UNIPAXALA HAS TROUBLE WITH NEOGI AGAIN, USE THIS TO CONTACT ME.

I HAVE A LONG-STANDING GRUDGE AGAINST THOSE SPIDER-CRITS.

BESIDES, THE PRICE FOR YOUR RESCUE WAS MORE THAN FAIR. YOU'VE EVEN ARRANGED TO SHIP THE TRIBESMEN BACK HOME SO I DON'T HAVE TO DO IT.

I'D ENJOY DOING BUSINESS AGAIN.

OUR BUSINESS IS NOT QUITE OVER, MEREDITH...

WE GAVE YOU ONE SHIP, YOU RETURNED WITH ANOTHER. KEEP IT-- IT IS NOT OUR PROPERTY AND OUR OWN WAS FAIRLY LOST.

WE ALSO COST YOU YOUR ***CREW***, SO WE OFFER YOU A SMALL REPLACEMENT...

WE WISH TO SEND YOUNG TEMBER WITH YOU. HIS SERVICE WILL PARTIALLY REPLACE YOUR LOSS, AND HE ALREADY HAS EXPERIENCE ON YOUR SHIP.

WHA...?

I SEE WHAT THEY'RE DOING-- TRYING TO RID THEMSELVES OF A PROBLEM CHILD.

IT MIGHT BE BEST FOR TEMBER TO LEAVE-- IF HE STAYS, HE'LL PROBABLY FIND HIMSELF EXILED SOON.

IF I TAKE HIM, THERE'S A CHANCE HE'LL FIND HIS ROLE IN LIFE.

IF HE'S A PROBLEM... I CAN ALWAYS ***LOSE*** HIM.

I'D BE HAPPY TO HAVE HIM CREW FOR ME.

COME ALONG, TEMBER.

KEEP HIM FOR AS MUCH TIME AS YOU NEED HIS SERVICES.

BUT... BUT... BUT...

MAY HIS SERVICE BE LOYAL...

...AND ***LONG!***

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